

THE
L I F E
OF
Mr. *WOOLSTON*, (77)

WITH
An impartial ACCOUNT of his
WRITINGS.



L O N D O N:
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THE
L I F E

Of the Reverend

Mr. Thomas Woolston.



AS the Writings of Mr. *Woolston* have gained the Attention of most Degrees of Men, and as they have given Birth to a learned Controversy between some of our most eminent Divines and Himself, an Enquiry into the Life of so remarkable a Person will not be ingrateful to the Reader. I do not here presume to appear an Advocate for his Doctrines, nor an Opponent

to them ; all that I pretend to is to relate Facts as they are ; and if I shall happen to omit any particular Passages of his Life, yet I will exhibit none the Truth of which I cannot assert by unquestionable Evidences : and in my Account of his Writings I shall only give an impartial Representation of their Subjects, and his Manner of handling them.

Mr. *Thomas Woolston* was born at *Northampton*, in the Year 1669, and was the Son of a reputable Trader of that Place. After a proper Education at a Grammar School he became a Student in *Sidney-College, Cambridge* ; where, after going through the previous necessary Gradations, he took his Degrees of Bachelor of Divinity ; but his Circumstances would not allow him to take his Doctor's Degrees. Here it is not improper to observe that the Members at the University are not under the same Obligation

Mr. Woolston.

tion to take their Doctor's as they are their Bachelor's Degrees. Mr. *Woolston* was admitted Fellow of *Sidney-College* at his due Time of Election, and continued so till of late Years. His first Appearance in the Republic of Letters was in the Year 1705, in a Work, printed at the University-press, intituled *the old Apology for the Truth of the Christian Religion against the Jews and Gentiles revived, &c.* In this Work, which contains near four hundred Pages in Octavo, he endeavours to prove all the Actions of *Moses* typical of *Christ* and his Church; and he shews how some of the Fathers understood them not to be real, but typical Relations of what was to come. This Book has much antient Learning in it, and is writ in a clear, tho not delicate, Style.

From this Time till the Year 1720 he published Nothing; and he led, as he had done before, a College.

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lege-life, applying himself indefatigably and with great Earnestness to his Studies; which were chiefly in Divinity; and he is allowed to have been a great Master of the Writings of the Fathers.

In the Year 1720 he published a Latin Dissertation in Octavo of betwixt forty and fifty Pages, the Title of which is *Dissertatio de PONTII PILATI ad TIBERIUM Epistolâ circa Res JESU CHRISTI gestas. Per MYSTAGOGUM*. In this Dissertation he attempts to prove that *Pontius Pilate* did write a Letter to *Tiberius Cæsar* concerning the Works of *Jesus Christ*, but that the Epistle delivered down to us among the Writings of the Fathers was forged.

In the same Year he published another small Pamphlet, in Latin, intitled *ORIGENIS ADAMANTII RENATI Epistola ad Doctores WHITBEIUM, WATERLANDIUM, WHISTONIUM, aliosque Literatos hujus Sæculi Disputatores, circa Fidem verè orthodoxam,*

am, & Scripturarum Interpretationem. In this Epistle he, in the Name of *Origen*, reprehends those learned Men who appeal to the Fathers as the best Interpreters of the Scriptures, and yet exhibit Doctrines directly repugnant to the Sense of the Fathers: he discovers several of their Errors, judging them principally by the Writings of *Origen*.

Soon after, in the same Year, he published a second Epistle in Latin, under the same Title; in which he follows the allegorical Interpretation of the Scriptures as in the first; and in which he has some pleasant Rallery on the important Disputations which have been held on particular Prepositions. *Parum refert*, says he, *qualem Præpositionem.* (*an in, ad, per, ob, vel cum,*) *Nomini CHRISTI & Spiritus sancti in Doxologis præponas.* *Usus hujus vel illius Præpositionis nec minuit,*

*minuit, nec auget, Divinitatem Fi-
lii & Spiritus sancti.*

In the same Year he published a Letter, of near seventy Pages, to Dr. BENNET, upon this Question, *whether the People called Quakers do not the nearest, of any other Sect in Religion, resemble the primitive Christians in Principles and Practice?* By ARISTOBULUS. This Letter was wrote to defend the Quakers from an Imputation, in a now obscure Pamphlet called the *Delphic Oracle*, of their being the worst of Heathens. In the Year 1721, he published another Letter to Dr. BENNET, in Defence of the *Apostles and primitive Fathers of the Church, for their allegorical Interpretation of the Law of MOSES, against the Ministers of the Letter, and literal Commentators of this Age.* Mr. Woolston, soon after, published an Answer to these two Letters, which, as has been observed

observed before, * are writ with
some Wit and Humour, and more
AGAINST another Set of Men
than FOR the Quakers.

In the Year 1722 he published a
Treatise intitled the exact Fitness of the
Time in which CHRIST was manifested in
the Flesh, demonstrated by Reason, against
the Objections of the old Gentiles, and of mo-
dern Unbelievers. First he endeavours
to shew that a long Process of Time, or
many Ages of the World, ought to be over-
past, before it could be convenient that God
should send CHRIST. 2d. That that Age
of the World, in which CHRIST was sent
to us, was the fittest, and most convenient,
for him to be sent in. 3d. That, tho it
was so long a Time before God sent CHRIST,
and tho his coming was necessary and useful
for the Salvation of Men, yet the Goodness
of God is not to be charged for that he was
sent no sooner. This Piece may be
justly numbered among our most
curious Tracts of Divinity; and Dr.

Brother Jen-

* In the Comedian, or Philosophical Enquirer,
Numb. 5.

Jenkins, and all who have wrote on the same Subject, are much inferior to Mr. *Woolston* in this Treatise; which was composed twenty Years before the Publication, and delivered as a publick Exercise both in *Sidney-College Chapel*, and in *St. Mary's Church*, as we are told by Mr. *Woolston* himself, in his Dedication to his Friend Dr. *Fisher*, Master of *Sidney-College*.

In the Years 1723, and 1724, came out Mr. *Woolston's* four free Gifts to the Clergy, and his own Answer to them, in five separate Pamphlets. In which he pursues his allegorical Scheme, against hireling Preachers who are Ministers of the Letter.

Soon after he published his *Moderator*, and two *Supplements to the Moderator*. These were occasioned by the Controversy betwixt Mr. *Collins* and his Opponents to the *Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion*: and in these he follows his allegorical Scheme. The first Prosecution against

Mr. Woolston. I I

gainst Mr. *Woolston* was for these Books; which was stopt by the Intercession of Mr. *Whiston*; with whom Mr. *Woolston* had preserved a Friendship from their Youth; and for whom he always expressed the highest Esteem. The following remarkable Incident which happened in this Prosecution is not unworthy Attention. The Attorney General, having heard that Mr. *Woolston* did not write the Books for which he was under Prosecution, (a Slander which was raised by his Enemies) told Mr. *Whiston*, when he was interposing in the Behalf of Mr. *Woolston*, what he had heard, and at the same Time expressed himself, very justly, with some Contempt and Indignation against a Man who could have Folly and Vanity enough to put his Name to the Writings of another Person: and I am mistaken if an eminent Divine, whom I chuse not to name, did not relate this to Sir *Philip York*. Mr. *Whiston*

assured the Attorney General that he had known Mr. *Woolston* from his Youth, and that he was thoroughly persuaded Nobody else writ the Books; which Attestation of Mr. *Whiston's* erased the Impression which the other malicious Report had made in the Attorney General. Mr. *Woolston*, while he was under this Prosecution, waited on the Archbishop of *Canterbury*, who protested that he was so far from forwarding the Prosecution that he was averse to that, and to all Prosecutions in Matters of Religion. His Grace desired Mr. *Woolston* to stay awhile with him, and their Discourse then turned upon antient Learning, and particularly the Fathers; and I have heard Mr. *Woolston* say that, among all the Men of Letters with whom he had conversed, he never heard any one talk with more Judgement and Learning than the Archbishop then did.

Mr.

Mr. Woolston, in the Year 1726, published a *Defence of the Thundering Legion*, against Mr. MOYLE'S *Dissertation*: the latter Part of which, about the Persecution in *Gaul*, is learnedly wrote; but little can be said in Commendation of the former Part of the Book.

In the Years 1727, 1728, 1729, and 1730, were published his *six Discourses on the Miracles of CHRIST*, and his two *Defences* thereof; in which he continues his allegorical Scheme, and supports it by Abundance of Quotations from the Fathers. Some think that he has treated the Subject in too ludicrous a Manner; which, tho it gives Offence to many, is not without Admirers. My Intent is not to enter on the Merits or Faults of the Writer in these Discourses; but I shall here proceed to a Relation of Facts which were the Consequences thereof.

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A second Prosecution commenced against Mr. Woolston for his first four Discourses on the Miracles. At his Tryal he distinguished himself by several reasonable, and smart, Speeches which he made to the Court. He said that *he thought it very hard that he should be tryed by a Set of Men who, though otherwise very learned and worthy Persons, were no more Judges of the Subjects on which he wrote than he himself was a Judge of the most crabbed Points of the Law.* He told the Lord Chief Justice Raymond that when he talked to the Archbishop of Canterbury about his Books and the Prosecution against him, his Grace said that *he wished he had not dwelt so much on hireling Priests: and here, my Lord,* continues Mr. Woolston to the Lord Chief Justice, *the Shoe pinches.* Here I must not omit mentioning a great Instance of Generosity in Mr. Birch, whose Name has been since changed to Whirley by Act of Parliament; this Gentleman offered himself as
Counsel

Counsel for Mr. *Woolston* without any Views of Reward: Part of what he advanced in Court in Defence of the Defendant was that Mr. WOOLSTON'S Intent was so far from bringing the Christian Religion into Contempt that it was to fix it on a better Foundation. He likewise questioned whether Affairs of Religion come properly under the Cognizance of that Court. However Mr. *Woolston* was found guilty of writing, printing, and publishing, those Books. I must here observe that I think it very surprising in our Laws that a Man being proved to be the Author, Printer, or Publisher, of any Book, that shall happen to be presented, shall subject him to a Penalty, without that Book being previously proved detrimental to Society, or repugnant to the Duty which we owe to our Sovereign and his Laws: I believe this has often been the Case. Mr. *Woolston* was sentenced to a Year's Imprisonment, and to pay a Fine of

of one hundred Pounds. He purchased the Liberty of the Rules of the King's Bench, where he continued after the Expiration of the Year, through an Inability of paying the Fine

I must in this Place, as a Warning to those who are apt to promise more than to perform, relate one flagrant Indiscretion, I believe I may venture to call it a Crime, of which one Gentleman was guilty towards Mr. *Woolston*. A certain Person of plentiful Fortune reported that he had defray'd Part of the Expence of Mr. *Woolston's* Suit with the King; and he likewise promised to defray *all* the Expence which that Prosecution should bring upon him. Notwithstanding these Promises, to which I myself have been Witness, he never advanced a Shilling before, nor after, Mr. *Woolston's* Commitment to the King's Bench Prison. Some of the Consequences of which Promises,
and

and Reports, were, that the unfortunate Gentleman in Confinement had more frequent Demands on him than otherwise he would have had. I shall not name the Person under this Censure, because he had performed some good-natured Acts towards Mr. *Woolston*, though he contributed no Money, and he may perhaps, in some Measure, atone for those Breaches of Promise by future Acts of Goodness.

Mr. *Woolston*, through all his Oppressions, spoke with great Respect and Veneration of the Lord Chief Justice *Raymond*, highly extolling the Lenity and Wisdom conspicuous in his Behaviour to him through his Trial.

Should I here omit mentioning the Endeavours which were used to obtain Mr. *Woolston's* Freedom by the late Dr. *Samuel Clarke*, I should be unjust to the Merits of that truly great and worthy Di-

vine. Dr. *Clarke*, a short Time before his Death, began his Solicitations at Court for the Releasement of Mr. *Woolston*, declaring that he did not undertake it as an Approver of his Doctrines, but as an Advocate for that Liberty which he had through his Life defended. He looked on Mr. *Woolston* as one under Persecution for Religion, which he thought inconsistent with the Liberties of *England*, and with the Doctrines of Christianity : and on this laudable Principle Dr. *Clarke* solicited the Relief of the oppressed, but was hindered from proceeding in his virtuous Design by Death, soon after Mr. *Woolston's* Commitment.

While Mr. *Woolston's* second Prosecution was carrying on, and before his Tryal, he paid a Visit to his old Friend Mr. *Whiston*, who, as soon as he beheld Mr. *Woolston*, lifted up his Hands, and with a loud Voice bad him go out of his House,

House, crying that the Sight of him was offensive to him: Mr. *Woolston*, amazed at this unusual Treatment, asked him how he had injured him; to which Mr. *Whiston* answered, with great Rapidity, *by your Discourses on the Miracles*. Mr. *Woolston* here began to expostulate with him, telling him that this Behaviour was not consistent with the Principles of Liberty which he had often asserted in his Writings, and in several Conversations with him: he likewise reminded him of his frequent Promises to befriend him in Times of Danger, and told him that unless Liberty of writing on religious Subjects was indulged, he could never expect to make any successful Progress in the Propagation of his own Notions of primitive Christianity. Mr. *Whiston*, deaf to his Expostulations, told him that he had gone greater Lengths than he imagined he would, and at the same Time

assured him that he could not bear the Sight of him. Mr. *Woolston*, seeing him violent and implacable, took his Leave of him, and never saw him afterwards. This is a strong Instance of the Power of misguided Zeal, which often transports Men who, without that Zeal, have the tenderest Sentiments of Humanity: this is the Case with Mr. *Whiston*, a Person of extraordinary Humility, free from all the vain Pride of Life, humane, and austere in his Manner of living, with Merit to recommend him to the highest Honours in the Church, and no Inclination to pursue them. Of this learned and worthy Man Mr. *Woolston*, notwithstanding the last unfriendly Greeting, always spoke with Love and Respect.

The most voluminous Author that appeared in the Controversy with Mr. *Woolston* is Dr. *Smallbroke*, the present Bishop of *Lichfield* and *Coventry*; in a Vindication of Part
of

of which Prelate's Writings Mr. *Woolston* is affirmed to have frequented the *Quaker-meetings*; a foolish Asperſion which is contradicted in a Pamphlet called the *Philosophical Enquirer* Number five. The Biſhop of *London* has offered Something in his *Pastoral Letters* againſt Mr. *Woolston*, but how thoſe Paſſages are looked upon, by moſt Men, as Anſwers I can not tell. I have heard Mr. *Woolston* ſpeak of a Book written by Dr. *Wade* againſt him, which he intended to conſider, if he had lived to have got his Freedom; which he thought to be more worthy his Conſideration than any other. To what I have ſaid of Mr. *Woolston's* Works I will add only a Recommendation of Mr. *Collins's* Diſcourſe on *Irony and Ridicule*; which ſeems to have been occaſioned by Mr. *Woolston's* Diſcourſes on the Miracles, and his Proſecution for them.

Mr.

Mr. *Woolston* sustained no small Loss by the Death of Dr. *Fisher*, whom I have mentioned before; who stood his Friend when Attempts were first made to take his Fellowship from him; and Mr. *Whiston* used his Interest, by Letters, with the College for the Continuance of his Fellowship; of which he was deprived about the Year 1721; the Pretence for depriving him was Nonresidence. Mr. *Craven* and Mr. *Allen*, Fellows of *Sidney-College*, were Persons in whose Friendship he much prided himself. From the Year 1721 he lived most in *London*; the last four or five Years of which were spent in Confinement to the Rules of the *King's Bench Prison*, and the last three Years were totally passed there.

After the Deprivation of his Fellowship his Brother now living at *Northampton*, an Alderman of that Place, allowed him thirty Pounds

Pounds a Year, and at particular Seasons sent him other Presents of necessary Provision: a Virtue for which his Brother will, I hope, always be remembered among good Men. Besides this annual Allowance from his Brother, he had several Contributions sent him, after his Commitment, by generous and well disposed Persons; some of which now make very considerable Figures in polite Literature.

As the Sale of *Mr. Woolston's* Works was very great his Gains arising therefrom must have been proportionable; but one Circumstance, to the Advantage of his Character, must be here related, which is, that he defray'd all the Expences which his Booksellers, Printers, or Publishers, were subjected to by selling and printing his Books; the Truth of which *Mr. Brotherton*, and other Persons, can attest.

When he was committed to the *King's Bench* Prison, he had in his Posses-

Possession about seventy Pounds, which he lodged in the Hands of a Tradesman in whose House he had lived several Years; and about the Beginning of the Year 1732 the Person who had his Money failed in his Business, by which Mr. *Woolston* lost thirty Pounds of his Money, having had the Rest, by Degrees, from him as he wanted it; the News of the Person's Misfortunes came to Mr. *Woolston's* Knowledge at a Time when he had scarcely any Money by him; and though that Sum of thirty Pounds was all he had in the World, besides his Brother's Allowance, instead of reproaching the unfortunate Man, he pityed him because he knew him, he said, to be an honest and industrious Man, and that his Misfortunes arose from Disappointments and Losses in Trade, and not from any Extravagance or Neglect, and he had likewise a Family of Children which added to Mr. *Woolston's*

ston's Compassion for him. Thus this good-natured Man stifled his own Loss in his Commiseration for the Person by whose Means he sustained that Loss.

The following Instance of his Patience and Humanity ought not to be omitted here. He being told that he was represented, in a scandalous Pamphlet called *the Life of Collonel* CHARTRES, as Chaplain to that Gentleman and as his Companion in some of his unlawful Pleasures, and being at the same Time advised to prosecute the Author, he enquired into the Circumstances of the Wretch who libelled him, and being informed of his having a Family and of his necessitous Condition, he said that if he should reduce the poor Creatures to Beggary, by a Prosecution, their Misery would give him more Pain than his just Revenge on the Man could possibly give him Pleasure. Here, I think,

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Mr. *Woolston's* Tenderneſs rendered him guilty of a real Crime; for when ſuch ſcurrilous Scribblers go unpunished, they proceed, in their dirty and offensive Work, to blacken Characters in Hopes of the ſame Impunity. As Mr. *Woolston* had never ſeen the Perſon of Collonel *Chartres*, this Libeller muſt certainly know that he could not repreſent him, as having any Commerce with him, without departing from Truth; I therefore can ſcarcely ſuppoſe any Evil which ſuch a Wretch cannot be guilty of, with the View of reaping an immediate Advantage from it.

While he was in the Rules of the King's Bench he met with ſeveral Inſults from ignorant and wicked Zealots: he was twice attacked before his own Door by a Fellow who ſtruck him ſeveral Times in his ſecond Affault, telling him that he had writ againſt his Saviour, and he deſerved ſuch Uſage!

stage: but Mr. *Woolston* was rescued from him by a Gentleman who chastised the Man with a good Beating.

As Mr. *Woolston* was, one Day, walking in *St. George's Fields*, a jolly young Woman met him, and accosted him in the following Manner, looking stedfastly in his Face. *You old Rogue, are not you hang'd yet?* To which Mr. *Woolston* answered, *good Woman I know you not; pray what have I done to offend you?* To which the Woman replied, *you have writ against my Saviour; what would become of my poor sinful Soul, if it was not for my dear Saviour? My Saviour, who dyed for such wicked Sinners as I am?*

The natural Inference, I think, that may be made from these two last Circumstances is, that if these two Persons had been possessed of more Humanity than they had, they would have been less offended

at Mr. *Woolston*; and if they had less Faith than they seem then to have had, they would, in all Likelihood, have had more Humanity.

For some few Months before he dyed, Endeavours were continued to be used, by some particular Friends, for the Deliverance of Mr. *Woolston* from Confinement; but his Death put an End to the Attempts of his Friends, and to his own Troubles here, on Saturday the twentyseventh of January, 1733, about nine o'Clock at Night, after an Illness which lasted but four Days, a Disease which was then epidemical, viz. a violent Cold, attended with Pains in the Head and Bones; but Mr. *Woolston's* greatest Grievance was a Stoppage in the Stomach, with an Incapacity of easing it by discharging any of the burdensome Matter there, notwithstanding the Help of Medicine. About Half an Hour before he dyed he was sitting by
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the Fire in his Bedchamber, when he asked his Nurse to help him to Bed, and a few Minutes before his Death he uttered these Words, *this is a Struggle which all Men must go through, and which I bear not only patiently but with Willingness.* He then immediately closed his Eyes and Lips with his own Fingers, seemingly with a Design to compose his Face with Decency, without the Help of a Friend's Hand, and then expired. He, through his short Illness, behaved himself with a chearful Resignation becoming a Man of Probity, Understanding, and Learning; a Character which is not in the Power of all his Enemies to rob him of. I must here observe that the greatest Obstruction to his Deliverance from Confinement was the Obligation which he was under to give Security for his not offending again by any future Writings; an Office which he would not impose

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pose on any Friend, because he was resolved not only to write again, but as freely as he had before. He has left behind him a Discourse addressed to Dr. *Smallbroke* Bishop of *Lichfield* and *Coventry*, which perhaps will one Day see the Light. He was buried, on Tuesday the thirtieth of January, in St. *George's* Church-yard in Southwark: he dyed a Bachelor.

To the Character which I have already given of him I may join that of an exemplary meek and temperate Person; and he has often declared to myself and many other of his Friends, that if he was possessed of more than sixty Pounds a Year he could not spend more on himself, so great, he said, was the Pleasure which he found in Temperance.

We have two Portraits of this eminent Man, one by *Vanderbank*, and another by *Dandridge*; that by the latter has a near Resemblance;

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blance ; but the Work of the former is esteemed a fine Picture as well as a just Likeness.

I have Nothing farther to add but this. I am sincerely grieved when I think that in the Annals of this excellent Reign it will be told that a Person dyed under Persecution for Religion.

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Mr. Woolston.

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